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ABSTRACT

The procedures used in an ethnographic study of a classroom language learning community are described. The research was undertaken to gain insights into adult language learning taking place among students who were not foreign language majors in an elementary French class at Michigan Technological University during the 1986-87 academic year. The study examined a cross-section of classroom behavior and the context in which the behavior occurred, and documented learners' study strategies and perceptions of the course, institution, instructor, and themselves. The tools used were classic ethnographic data-collection measures, including daily classroom observation, interviews, and collection of all student work, course records, and other relevant documentation. The report outlines the theoretical framework of ethnographic research and the research design, including the research team's composition, observation procedures, interviews, documentation, and analysis. A 35-item bibliography, interview transcripts, and sample observation notes are appended. (MSE)

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Research Design and Procedures for Team Ethnography in the Study of an Elementary French Class at Michigan Technological University

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Introduction

During the 1986-87 academic year, a team of eight faculty and student researchers conducted an ethnography of an elementary French class at Michigan Technological University. Our purpose, in this research undertaking, was to furnish a "thick description" (Geertz, 1973) of a classroom language learning community. We conducted this year-long study to gain insights into adult language learning as it takes place among non-foreign language majors in a classroom setting. We studied a cross-section of classroom behavior and the context in which it took place. In addition, we docu-

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mented learners' study strategies, their perceptions, and feelings about the course, Michigan Tech, the instructor, and themselves. Our tools consisted of the classic troika of ethnographic data-collection measures: daily classroom observations, interviews, and the collection of all student work, course records, and any other relevant documentation.

Our rationale for conducting an ethnography stems from the realization that language learning cannot be fully understood without considering the social context in which it occurs. Classroom language learning behavior is governed by complex interactions of factors that occur both inside and outside the classroom. Our task was to discover these relationships and describe how they influence language learning behavior. In the ethnography, we explored a wide range of language learning variables concurrently instead of limiting ourselves to the study of a few rigorously controlled variables. We studied "methods" variables such as grammar-based language learning, early oral production, and proficiency-oriented classroom activities along with social and psychosocial variables in the language learning process. The wealth of observation and interview data made us privy to information that would not normally be available to researchers or language instructors.

Due to the length of our document and space limitations in most scholarly journals in foreign language acquisition,

we have chosen to submit a detailed description of the research design, procedures, and theoretical framework to the ERIC Clearing House on Languages and Linguistics. Also enclosed are a transcript of a sample interview and sample observation notes. Our goal, in this document, is to offer a detailed description of team ethnography to scholars who will read our findings in future articles and who are interested in research and design within the field of naturalistic inquiry

Theoretical framework

Related research in foreign language acquisition

Because FL learning in the United States occurs most often in classrooms, it is logical that research efforts focus on the classroom and on its participants. Long (25: p.4) postulates that "what goes on inside classrooms...is the single most crucial element in determining how students perform." Despite pioneering efforts by VanPatten, Dvorak, and Lee (37) and many others to bring a research perspective to FL learning, classroom-oriented FL learning is still a vast unexplored territory. Within the realm of classroom-oriented research, there exists a growing and exciting body of research that focuses on the learner. This learner-centered research focuses on many issues which include learner perceptions on FL learning (Horwitz 15, 17;

Bailey 1), learner anxiety (Horwitz 16, Campbell and Ortiz 4, Bailey 1, 2), learner strategies (Hosenfeld 18, 19, 20; Oxford and Nyikos 31, Oxford 29, Oxford and Ehrman 30, Ehrman and Oxford 6, Musumeci 27), and learner correction strategies (Byrnes 3, Frantzen and Rissel 7).

Despite the growing success and popularity of the abovementioned research, many of these studies describe discreet aspects of language behavior in a decontextualized manner. We can appreciate, for example, that fifty-nine percent of French students in Horwitz's study (17) reported feeling self-conscious when they spoke French in front of other people. In and of itself, this statistic contributes to our knowledge base on the role of oral production in FL learning. However, the survey instrument does not explain why the students felt self-conscious and under what specific circumstances they felt self-conscious. It does not reveal if there are situations in which the student feels less anxiety-ridden when speaking the foreign language. The survey instrument does not permit us to observe these students in the classroom as they attempt to speak in the foreign language. Ethnography, however, is a research paradigm that is designed to study and describe classrooms and language learners in ways that quantitative research cannot.

Ethnography is designed to study the complexities of human behavior in social settings: in our case, language

learning and teaching behavior in an elementary French class throughout the students' year-long general education requirement. Ethnography enables researchers to study language learning in context and understand it from the "native's point of view" (Spradley 35: p.3). We invited students to participate in the description of their learning process. In most studies, learners are merely subjects who do little more than circle letters or numbers on questionnaires or tests. We wanted to capitalize on the fact that our subjects were human beings who have a lot to say about learning. Finally, we chose ethnography because it is a flexible paradigm which permits researchers to study numerous language learning issues simultaneously. It also permits researchers to address emergent issues as they surface during a study.

Theoretical foundations of ethnography

The theoretical foundations of our research methodology emanate from ethnographic theory and procedures that have been developed or explicated in anthropology (Geertz 8, Pelto and Pelto 32), sociology (Spradley 34, 35; Douglas 5), and educational research and evaluation (Guba 12, Guba and Lincoln 13, Lincoln and Guba 24, Hammersley and Atkinson 14, Goetz and LeCompte 11). The hallmarks of any well-designed ethnographic study include a theoretical orienta-

tion in phenomenology, an emergent context-dependent design, and triangulation in data-collection and analysis. Since the early days of anthropological case study, ethnography has developed into a highly systematic and rigorous research method to answer the criticisms of subjectivity and lack of research rigor. Our purpose in this section is to describe ethnographic theory, procedures and techniques as they applied to the design and implementation of our study.

The work of studying a culture is a massively complex task because culture is, as Geertz (8: p. 10) describes, "a multiplicity of complex conceptual structures, many of them superimposed upon or knotted into one another...." FL classrooms share many of the complexities that cultures possess. Doing ethnography, according to Geertz (8: p.10), is like reading a foreign manuscript that is "faded, full of ellipses, incoherencies...." It is because of the complexity of human behavior in social situations that proponents of phenomenology believe that the study of culture defies description in nomothetic terms. Rather, Geertz hypothesizes that researchers must search for meaning, in place of theory building, through description and interpretation. Cultural analysis, which can never reach completion, is best attained by "guessing at meanings, assessing the guesses, and drawing explanatory conclusions from bet-

ter guesses" (p. 20).

To unknot the tangle of complex conceptual structures that Geertz describes, the ethnographer uses many tools in a cyclical process of data collection and analysis. Geertz's procedure of multiple guesses and interpretation is better illustrated in Spradley's Developmental Research Sequence (35) in Figure I. As Figure I illustrates, "thick description" is accomplished through a twelve-step process of constant reformulation of research questions, data collection and analysis before completion of the study. In the present study, the research team participated in this cyclical process by constantly revising ethnographic (or research) questions, discovering new questions to ask, changing the scope of observation, and analyzing data in weekly meetings, in written projects, and in researcher journals.

(Insert Figure I here)

The scope of ethnographic observation is multifaceted: "thick description" is microscopic, and it is also wide-angled and telephotographic. Figure II shows the multifaceted scope of the present study. The present study began with a wide-angled scope that continued during the course of the study. The wide-angled scope was designed to capture

the major events of the class. These events included class activities, teacher and student behavior, the physical setting, and so on. The scope became telephotographic when specific events and behavior merited closer examination. The study of experienced and novice learners of French, for example, emerged into a subject that required a telephotographic focus. Novice learners of French, whose language learning behavior was especially interesting, underwent a microscopic focus. All aspects of their behavior, ranging from seating patterns to errors on communicative writing assignments came under close scrutiny.

(Put Figure II here)

Our analysis procedures are based primarily on Lincoln and Guba's theory on establishing trustworthiness (24). Instead of superimposing criteria for trustworthiness found in the experimental research paradigm, Lincoln and Guba set down their own criteria to ensure credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Table I illustrates the measures for establishing trustworthiness in an ethnographic study.

(Place Table I here)

In the present study, we incorporated the major measures delineated in Lincoln and Guba. To increase the probability of high credibility, we satisfied the terms of prolonged engagement and persistent observation by remaining for one year in the elementary class and observing it approximately 75% of the time. We satisfied transferability by providing a thick description of the elementary French class. Interview data, observation notes, student work, class records, researcher's reflexive journals, write-ups, and so on comprised more than 3,000 pages of data. To increase dependability and confirmability, we conducted an internal audit of all data analysis.

We conducted the present study with a research team because of numerous methodological advantages to traditional one-person ethnographies (Douglas 5, Lincoln and Guba 24). The use of a team enabled us to go into greater depth than any previous ethnographic study in FL acquisition research. Team field research also provided us with a multiperspectival view of that culture that was crucial in data analysis and interpretation. In the present study, for example, the multiperspectival view of the elementary French class came from student and faculty researchers who represented diverse fields: FL acquisition, French literature, English rhetoric and composition, and scientific and technical communication. Moreover, the use of a team

enhanced our chances at attaining trustworthiness in two ways: 1) it added researcher triangulation (concurrence among team members) to data-source triangulation and 2) it provided greater interrater reliability by enabling us to put two observers in the classroom instead of one.

We included undergraduate students in the research team for several practical and methodological reasons. To conduct a year-long ethnographic study, we needed researchers who had the time and the willingness to collect and analyze data on a daily basis. At the time of the study, we had limited access to graduate research assistants to serve on the team; we were unable to find several faculty members who had the same time commitments and research interests that we had. Because the Humanities Department of Michigan Tech has a tradition of including undergraduates in research projects, we examined the viability of using undergraduate scientific and technical communication majors.

In a prior ethnography of a first-year English composition class at Michigan Tech (George and Young, 1989), we discovered that undergraduate researchers were excellent data collectors. They proved to be unintrusive in observing the English composition class daily. In the present study, they were also unobtrusive, as evidenced by several documented incidents where students (forgetting the identity of

the undergraduate researchers) asked them to participate in partner-pair oral work. We also found that students spoke freely to the undergraduate interviewers in the English composition study; the same level of frankness was evident in the present study. In comparing Michigan Tech-sponsored class evaluations and our interview data, we found that students were much more vocal in their assessment of the class and the instructor, especially in expressing their displeasure in interviews. An unexpected benefit of including undergraduate researchers on the team occurred during data analysis when they provided a student's perspective to the behavior and events of the class.

Research design

The research team

The research team consisted of five undergraduate researchers, a senior researcher, and two French faculty members. The undergraduates, all with excellent academic records and at least one year of college French, were upper-level Scientific and Technical Communication majors; they received nine hours of required Senior Project credit for participating in the study. The faculty members included the senior researcher, who is a professor of rhetoric and composition, and two professors of French. One of the French professors, the instructor of the courses stu-

died, did not participate in data collection or analysis until the end of the school year. A second French professor joined the research team during data analysis (Spring 1987) to provide a language teacher's perspective. The senior researcher, who had several years experience in ethnographic research, trained the research team and directed the work of the group throughout the school year.

Procedures in data collection--classroom observations

Daily classroom observations by two student-researchers served as the backbone of data collection (see Appendix B for sample observation notes). We engaged in a type of participant observation which Spradley (35) classifies as "passive participation" (p. 59). Passive participation entails being present in the setting with minimal participation in classroom events and minimal interaction with the participants of the study. During classroom observations, our observers sat at opposite ends in the back of the room out of the flow of classroom traffic with one role: to observe and record data as completely and accurately as possible. They did not participate in any of the class activities and seldom interacted with the participants of the study except with key informants during interviews.

In the classroom observations, we chronicled the "who," "what," "where," "when," and "how" at a macro and micro

level, as specified by Goetz and LeCompte (11) and Spradley (35). The "who" refers to individuals present in the setting: students, instructor, and observers. The "what" entailed individual actions by the class participants (students asking questions, taking notes, looking up a word in the dictionary, refering to the textbook during drill, studying another subject, complaining) and groups of related actions such as class activities. The "where" comprised the physical setting such as the physical environment of the classroom, seating arrangement, and movement by both instructor and students. The "how" and "why" were largely determined in interviews with students and the instructor.

The observation notes contained several features. The first was a seating chart at the top of the page, which indicated where each student sat, as well as where the instructor and observers were located. Time was noted in the left-hand margins of the notes, at approximately five-minute intervals; the observers used additional notation systems, such as checks or asterisks, to indicate significant events that they wanted to describe in more detail later. At every weekly team meeting, the senior researcher and the undergraduate researchers prepared observational goals and strategies for the upcoming week. No audio- or videotaping of the class took place. Classroom observations, by two trained observers, averaging three out of

four instructional days a week for the full academic year, provided the principal data on which to base our analysis.

Interviews

Solicited insider accounts provided a crucial dimension in data collection, enabling learners and the instructor to give an insider's account of the class (see Appendix A for a transcript of a sample interview). Every quarter four student-researchers each selected one informant based on a set of criteria established by the team. The informants represented a wide sample of students: male and female, debutants and faux debutants, successful and less-successful students. In all, we conducted 29 interviews (for a total of 290 hours) with 11 different student informants. We also interviewed the course instructor six times for a total of eight hours during the course of the study. All interviews were recorded on cassette tape, with the permission of the informants. After each interview was conducted, it was transcribed, word-for-word, sound-by-sound, by the interviewer. Interviews were conducted as often as possible in the informant's room to put him or her at ease. The procedures for conducting interviews emanated from Spradley (34).

The interviews served several purposes in the study. First, they helped us to confirm or reject hypotheses that

we had formed during classroom observations. Conversely, information acquired in informant interviews served as the starting point for hypotheses that we later confirmed or rejected in classroom observations or other data sources. Interviews provided us with important background information that put the students' French-learning experience into context. This information included discussions of the students' prior FL experience, their academic history at Michigan Tech, their reasons for studying French, their feelings concerning the value of a foreign language in their profession, and so on. Interviews served as a forum to express their satisfaction or disatisfaction about any aspect of the course. Interviews also enabled students to describe their study strategies, and their processes for completing homework assignments, exams, or quizzes. Finally, we used interviews to compare the students' and the instructor's perceptions of what transpired in the class.

Documentation

In addition to observation notes and interview transcripts, we collected any relevant documentation from the instructor, students, and the university to better understand the context that we were studying. From the instructor we collected the textbooks, all course materials, les-

son plans, grade books, course evaluations, records of office visits, and lab use. From the students we collected several students' written work: compositions, completed workbook and lab exercises, tests and quizzes for performance evaluation and analysis. From Michigan Tech we collected their self-study report, a document prepared for the North Central Association accreditation team and North Central's final evaluatory report of the university.

Analysis

We analyzed the data using what Hammersley and Atkinson (14) describe as "progressive focusing," a characteristic funnel construction. Formal data analysis began as early as the seventh week of the study as the team was asked to write down what they regarded as "truths" about the class. After the group generated individual lists of generalizations, the auditor collated them, combined duplications and identified ways in which the generalizations could be made more specific. At this stage, the researchers began looking for evidence supporting their generalizations, while still engaged in collecting additional data in the class. Generalizations were submitted in writing for discussion and revision during team meetings. Generalizations later evolved into write-ups which were the compilation of conclusions. The write-up process endured several drafts which

lasted until the end of the academic year. During the whole process of analysis, the research team continued to collect data which solidified or shattered generalizations. At the end of the academic year, the course instructor read the data thoroughly and worked with the research team on additional analysis before collaborating on a formal description of the elementary French class.

The key to the analysis stage was the participation of the auditor. The auditor was an experienced ethnographer from a previous study conducted at Michigan Tech. His job was to authenticate any claims made by anyone on the research team, including the senior researcher. His internal audit, which lasted for the duration of the study, entailed two tasks (Lincoln and Guba 24): examining the process by which the data was collected and examining the generalizations and write-ups for accuracy. In his first task, he worked with the senior instructor to verify proper procedures for classroom observation and interviews. In his second task, he ensured that 1) all claims were fully supported in the data, and 2) all possible explanations of student and teacher behavior were considered. The auditor was the last of many checks and balances to ensure trustworthiness in the description of the elementary French class.

NOTE

1 All internal data on Institution X came from the Registrar's and Admission's Office.

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Biographical Statement

STEVEN J. LOUGHRIN-SACCO (Ph.D., The Ohio State University) is Assistant Professor of Humanities at Michigan Technological University. Recipient of the 1988 Distinguished Teaching Award, he has published articles on FL teaching in FL Annals, the ADFL Bulletin, and The Central States Report on the Teaching of Foreign Languages. His major research focus is the sociology of FL learning using naturalistic inquiry as his primary research paradigm.

ELLEN M. BOMMARITO (Ph.D. candidate, Indiana University) served as the research coordinator for four ethnographic studies at MTU. She is currently an Instructor of English Composition at Saint Clair Community College. While at

Indiana University, she studied ethnography under Egon G. Guba, Robert Carey and Sharon Smith.

WENDY M. SWEET (B.S. candidate in Scientific and Technical Communication at Michigan Technological University) has co-conducted three ethnographic studies at MTU and has co-presented papers at Research Perspectives on Adult Language Learning and Acquisition and The Central States Conference. She is currently co-editor of the Communiqué, an international STC newsletter.

Appendix A: Transcript of an Ethnographic Interview

Authors' note: To give the reader an idea of a representative interview, we offer this interview between Wendy M. Sweet, a student-researcher and John P., a student of French at Michigan Tech. This interview, the first of two interviews between Wendy and John P., originates from a follow-up ethnographic study of a two-week summer intensive French course conducted at MTU during the summer of 1988. Although this interview does not originate from the 1986-7 study, it is similar in the types of questions and responses found in the first study.

W: Great. Tell me just a little bit about yourself,

like hometown, general biography.

J: My name is John P. (last name deleted) I am from Washington, Michigan which is about 50 miles north of Detroit. I have one sibling. She is a sister and is a year younger than me. Both my parents are still married. We are pretty much a traditional family, but very open-minded. We have a lot of freedom and get to make a lot of decisions and be responsible for ourselves, and that has been a good method of raising children I think.

W: A method to follow.

J: Not to say that we haven't made mistakes, because we made many.

W: My family too.

J: I guess the most interesting thing, and probably the most important reason why I am taking this class is last...two years ago in 1986...he was sent over to England for 1-1/2 years as part of an exchange program, not an exchange program, but he was over there to oversee work that General Motors was doing so he went to Stratford in England. Last summer I lived over there, and it was really my first cultural experience. I was exposed to a lot and I did go on the continent for about one week and one-half. I met a lot of people who could overwhelm me with their language. I felt very helpless and upon coming back, I just...I really feel it is important to know something...to

get a different perspective, you know, of your own culture through another language, and so there is this push right now with me better late than never to try to learn something and make an attempt, and that is the main reason why I am doing this and its little interesting tidbit on something I've done.

W: What type of experience have you had with French in the past?

J: We had a program back in...well I took it....we had like in when we were in junior high we were allowed to take...electives..we were given electives and it was Spanish and French for I think 10 weeks and that was pretty much my experience so it was like 7 years ago, 6 years ago, 7 years ago.

W: So you didn't have French in high school. Well I had it in ninth grade which could be considered, but it was only for like one semester following my Spanish.

W: Okay when you said you went to England and you wanted to do more of, your last chance, why did you pick French to do. There are two programs, French and Spanish.

J: Right, actually, right. French to me, I don't know, I guess it did seem more like business-oriented. I would think...there was really no big reason except that I thought French was kind of neat so I picked it. I figured it is close to German. German would have been an ideal

one, but they didn't offer that.

W: Okay. Let me ask you just another couple of questions. What year are you here at Michigan Tech?

J: I'm a senior now. I am graduating in the fall. It doesn't mean that I will be moving on. We're not sure about that. I'm not sure. You never know.

W: Okay. Earlier you had said that you are living in Wads. I know this summer that you were living off of campus. Why did you decide to move into Wadsworth?

J: It seemed silly not too. Because in the description of the course, they mentioned that they have dorms set aside for you and the whole idea of the course is to give you maximum exposure to the language to allow you to immerse yourself in it and pick it up. That just seemed....that is what I wanted to do. I wanted to get away from everything. I haven't really been listening to the radio. I have been trying to get away from as much English as I can. They have the computers over there at the dorm which is a really nice setup. They have the VCR. I have brought home movies to pop in like the French in Action. I have watched so far three of those at home. I have played on the computer, and I don't know I just don't think other people realize you know what's over there, and maybe they have other commitments. I really have no other commitments except for this class.

W: Okay, what other students are in the dorms right now, what other French....

J: There are none. There is no other male students. There are three Spanish students and there are I think seven Spanish women, or seven women in the dorms, two of which are in the French program.

W: So there are only three from the French program? You and these two other women.

J: Right.

W: How do you like living in the dorm situation with the Spanish kids.

J: I think it is a neat setup. Everybody is pretty considerate. There are no big problems and I like it that you are given the freedom. Basically, the good thing that Steve had said to us. I don't know about the other instructor, but the good thing he said "We all expect, because you are up here, first of all you have to be highly motivated and you are enthusiastic and you must be kind of a chore, or have some idea of responsibility and that was basically it, he did not have to give us any lectures on the rules and this and that and I appreciate that and its true, I think everybody in the class is pretty motivated for different reasons, you know.

W: When you first heard about this program and you decided to participate in it, what were your expectations?

What did you think? What were your first impressions?

J: First of all, I just want to have fun. That was the big thing and I had a rough term before that, and just to try and get some exposure to French. I always look at things that they are going to be very hard so I don't ever have any expectations that things are easy, because that is usually how things are. I think I am a slow learner. My learning ability is not...I don't pick things up as fast as most people.

W: Me either.

J: Right so you just have to keep plowing into it and study a lot and be stubborn, and that is not a problem for me. So I did not have any expectations except the class would be kind of hard and that would be fun. I feel good about that. I feel content the way things have been.

W: Okay. On Sunday you had the orientation program with Steven and the rest of the French students. When you left on Sunday, how did you feel when you came away from that.

J: Excited. Definitely scared because I was comparing myself right away to the other students, but I did not feel really out of place at all. You know they laid everything out right away and we started speaking French, and that was good, that was the way to do it, just right away start, you know. But, basically, I was just scared, a little, but

very excited though.

W: That's great. On the first day of class on Monday, you took a placement exam. How did you do.

J: I scored 370 [out of 800].

W: How did you feel about that?

J: Not too bad, considering from what I learned, how long ago it was, I don't feel my retention was all that bad. So I gave myself a pat on the back for that. I think I have to do much better. I'm not....my goal is to get into French II, but if I can't do that I'll be just as happy to get into the beginning French class. We will see what happens.

W: Okay. On the first day of class, describe for me what you do each...like take a typical day and describe in the beginning...you know you can take the first two days would be great and describe like what your impressions were along with the activities that you did?

J: Okay, well I take very good notes and I would like to refer to my notes while I do this.

W: That's fine.

J: I don't know if they are very good, but...I write down pretty much everything. It starts out we always are given a schedule of the activities, and that is really nice because it kind of gives the course structure, you know cohesion, and I like that because I like to know what is

expected of me right away instead of screwing around, you know, it just makes everything more serious. We have a nice activity where (unclear) which is a meditation to clear our heads and to try and get rid of everying so you can do maximum French learning.

W: How did you feel about that, the first day you did it?

J: I like it. I like the music. It was a little far out, by the way, to do the stretching.

W: Why?

J: Well the meditation, you know, it just reminded me of like pregame football or something, that what I felt I was getting ready for....for a battle, but it was good. I look forward to it. I am open-minded so I did not have any conceptions, I'm just here to see how everybody, how they like to run it, and so I'll go along with it. I like to participate. Then after that we do the stretching and that gets the blood flowing. It kind of wakes you up too, which is important. Then we go into a conversation a little bit with Sylvia. Then Steve usually comes in and he passes out the schedule and then we get into French discussion or learning verbs or nouns or whatever the particular subject happens to be that day. Then, we have, well today for example we watched another French in Action video which is interesting. I like, it lets you know how little you know,

and it's realistic to me. I like that. I think the nicest thing, you know, everything else...after we do grammar and we do all the other subjects, but probably the nicest thing is when we do go to Sylvia's house. That is a really neat idea to do.

W: Why? Why do you think?

J: Because it's the cooking. It's practical. All we do is talk French. For myself, I listen mostly. I struggle with simple sentences and I am picking things up slowly, but it is just, its emergent, I mean it is just like, for example when I walked into the Cafe yesterday, something really weird happened to me. I walked in and looked at the television, it was a newscaster, and I thought he was speaking French. Mike was next to me. I said "Mike listen, listen, they are speaking French". You know, like, no they aren't, your weird. It was so weird. It was just, I don't know, it was just a weird experience, but I like that and it is also fun.

W: Why is it fun.

J: Well, the cooking and its laid back and its personal, and these instructors are very enthusiastic about what they are doing which right away, I'll carry the flag for these guys anywhere. You know, that's something that sometimes lacks at this university, and I am sure we all have had experiences with professors that were that way, so

that's how learning should be to me. It's still formal. I still respect the professor and I still try and call them by their title or...you are not total buddy, buddy with these people, but they are..they make you very receptive to learning.

W: That's great. So what happens after you go to Sylvia's house?

J: Then we have three groups and the three groups take a chore, or lets say they had to cook or they would go out on the porch for a conversation or they would learn more vocabulary through a book we have which looks like a kiddy book. I like it though, it's kind of neat, very graphic. The conversation is interesting too, because we have some good assistants who aren't getting paid too for this except for free lunches, and that just shows enthusiasm that these two professors have to get volunteers like this, you know for something that would be a drag. I don't think you could get just anybody, and yet they have five. So, we sit on the porch and we will talk, like you know....simple things like to ask what time it is or to say what you are wearing (speaking French) I said that backwards actually.

W: That is alright, I don't understand French anyway.

J: Just to start building up, and you know, just to get you into it. Then after that we get a nice break. There is plenty of time for breaks. We have a half hour in

between Sylvia's house and when the instruction ends in the morning and then we have a little break in the afternoon. You know, that's all fine. I like structure.

W: How do you feel about the breaks.

J: One half hour, well it is not enough time to really enough time to lay down and get a good nap.

W: That's terrific. You mentioned a couple of things about the teaching assistants. How do you feel about the teaching assistants?

J: I feel they are assisting the instructors well. They are also motivated, particularly, you know, I am probably the slowest learner in the class, and nobody....everybody is very helpful. Like for example, when I sit down to start eating or something, Andrew will come up or I will go over by him, and we will just trade dialogues or like when I want to leave Sylvia's house, I want to thank her for the meal and I can't remember what it was now. Well, anyway, so we worked on that for awhile, the tense and how to say you know (speaking in French) I don't remember it now, but I wrote it down which is what I review when I go home at night. They are just helpful. They are enthusiastic also about what they are doing, so they are not wasting anybody's time.

W: Okay, super. How do you feel...you mentioned a little bit earlier about Steven and Sylvia as instructors.

Can you...

J: Well Steven, just from the first day when he talks about all these different directions he is taking the French to you. It's, to me it's practical, because that the certificate and commercial French and his trips over there, just from my little brief glimpse of the culture over there and what is happening, and even from things...I read a lot on my own about you know the work place changing and the economy being more global and how is America going to prepare for it particularly John Nasbitt, Megatrends and (unclear) Corp. and I think a lot of Americans and even a lot of Tech students, they are so focused in a lot in the scholastics and it...and they don't get a chance to just step out of the country particularly when you are watching a news show, and the whole news segment is maybe local and then there is a little bit thats worldly or global, and that is great and everthing, but it is hard to get a perspective and that is one thing when you see these people who take these certificates, these language certificates, I admire them because to take two years of a language which is three credits a term, well, it could be four credits a term, say 12 credits a year for two years that 24 credits along with all of their engineering if they are engineers or STCs everything requires a vast amount of work to be a student here, just shows a lot of initative and that is

something that I am sure Steve is trying to wake everybody up and say, you know, this is what we are going to have to do. This is what is going to be happening. If we give you this skill, you will be worth more and you will have a better insight than other people. I think just for him doing that, that's is just like waving the University's name everywhere. I mean if he is going France and working out something with the president of the university there, that's helping Michigan Tech, but it is also helping people get an idea that Americans are aware of these things and that they do care and they just aren't...as for example...one man told me the sun doesn't rise and set on the United States. That was great to tell me that, I mean I was almost a little insulted, but I could see from the point view...

W: How do you feel about Sylvia.

J: Sylvia is just as enthusiastic. She is more...I want to say more patient, a little more....Steve wants to keep making everybody do the work and everything and like particularly today when they gave the option of an advance group accelerated and then a group that kind of had to let everything as he said marinate all information. That was good. I think they are very responsive to the class's needs and they always ask for suggestions or they want to know if this is what we want. She is very patient going

over the grammar with us and she does... we have been really been getting some, you know, quite a bit more homework than before, and that's good. It's making us learn it and practice it. I don't know, its hard. I was thinking because I always want to try and be objective and I want to come up with some pieces of suggestions, but its hard for me in my position because basically I took this with not as much knowledge as everybody else so everything that comes my way is pretty much...you know I like, I accept and I don't complain about it because I realize I really don't think I should have been allowed in the class.

W: Why?

J: Well, because I feel I am behind other people. I knew some of the verbs. I remembered some of that and I knew the months and the days, the alphabet and pronunciations, but the meaning and how to use it, slipped. I don't know, it's hard to say. A lot is expected of us, and may be, I guess one thing, you know it is hard to regulate this...but the 9 o'clock to 4 is kind of stringent. That's a long period, but you know they help make that easier with the breaks. But, that's one thing, I guess, I like to get up early, but I don't like to get up early to go somewhere. I'd rather get up early and you know be on my own and study for a little bit, but I can't use that time to study so I guess that is one gripe, but as far as the way the instruc-

tors are treating us in respect and enthusiasm, I mean they are more than bending over backwards. I mean I have gone to many instructors houses or homes for meals and that is learning and that is throwing a lot of convention out, but it just makes you excited about it.

W: How do you feel about the other students in class.

J: I think it is becoming more of a group because the class is small and we are very interactive with each other with our comments and with trying to talk to each other in French and dialogues. It makes learning a little more fun and reinforces it so you try not to miss class or come in late, things like that, but everybody seems to be having fun. In the kitchen, when we cook, that is funny. The day that my group had to cook, the group I was in, we had the onion soup, and we were just sitting there and we were bawling. I think I had the worse, because I had to keep sauteing these things. I was bawling and it was just, it was really funny and the humor just makes everyone close together and then the learning, it makes you serious, it is just fun to do things with other people.

W: Okay, that is about all the quesions I have. Is there anything you would like to add like your first impressions.

J: Okay, that would be good. I guess basically another reason I decided to take this class besides my

little experience and all that was that I had intercultural communication with Dieter Adolphs who is another very enthusiatic instructor and we had to have this outside assignment where we had to do something extra for the class. We had to bring in a speaker. We had to talk about another culture that we visited. We had to bring something intercultural or lecture in the class and one girl who had had French, she brought in Steve and he spoke to our class. That is when I first...he talked about what he was doing and about some of his experiences, and he was very enthusiastic. He is a good speaker. He uses his French, you know...that is when I first decided WOW you know you could catch something on the tail end. This guy seems kind of neat. You know he seems to like what he is doing and you know he mentioned some of the programs....I hadn't heard of the summer intensive then at that time. In fact, I heard about that from someone else, but I don't remember so I can't quote you. So anyway that was my first encounter with him and my impression was very positive. The enthusiam, that something...the initative....someone is going out of their way. That makes a student go more out of his way, and even the relating personal experiences, it allows you to picture things. How he was over there and about how the French don't like to wash dishes in stagnant water because they think it is gross and they like to wash them

under running water. You know that just really appealed to me. So that was the first time I met him.

W: Super. Thank you very much.

J: An afterthought I just had was although everybody in the class is very enthusiastic about the learning, it is not as much of a grind because you are having fun with the different activities, singing songs and all that. There is an age level difference. I think generally most of the students in the class are...may be haven't started at the University, at least half of them I would say are just out of high school and that some of them have other...say they have a job also or something...and that does kind of take away from the full effect, and sometimes that can be a little distracting, but I think....

W: How is it distracting?

J: Well when somebody comes in late, punctuality is something I have been just really getting into and trying to go nuts about. I hate a lot of times when professors...you say you are going to meet them somewhere and you are going to do this...and it is almost to the point where I have been let down with missed meetings with professors who are people you are supposed to respect, and you know all of that, where I have had to almost get confirmation calls ahead of time to say that I am just calling to confirm that we are going to have this meeting at so and so...just to

kind of politely remind them. When you show up late for a class so something, it kind of takes away from everything, and that is probably the one bad thing about they really have a hard time controlling as far as even with the salute of (unclear), the meditation thing. I think some people feel a little weird about that, a little uncomfortable it because they have never done it, and you know, I have heard some comments about that.

W: Why do you think they are uncomfortable.

J: They are not as open-minded about it. I don't know they think it is weird to have it done before, I don't know I just particularly don't like that. I can think of one, two, two people that I know for sure who haven't. Nobody else listens to this. Well, Christine and Abe, and I know that, that....when I go into something I try to go into it all the way, and if I don't like something, well then I will talk about it afterwards, but you know I will give something a shot before I do it.

W: Are there any other ways that the age difference....

J: No I haven't seen any others except for that, because in the dorm with the two girls, two women that are in the study, that are studying and live in the female section.

W: Which two girls are those?

J: Those are Toni and Jennifer. They study. We do our homework together. They are quite serious, I mean. They, in fact, when I go over there, I am pooped, I lay down and go to sleep and they are still plugging away at the computer or something. I haven't noticed any difference there, but the only difference I noticed like is may be with the punctuality and some other responsibilities. There is another girl who has a job, but other than that those are hard things to control and you know you want to make sure he has some people in the class so I don't think there is anything really unaccepted, you know. The punctuality and the lateness.

W: Thank you, great.

Appendix B: Sample Observation Notes from October 20, 1986

(Put Appendix B here)

Appendix B: Sample Observation Notes from October 15, 1986

Seating arrangement

Marsha

John

Larry Tom

Jessica Kristin

Ben Ken

Tracy Leslie

Cindy David

Jean Linda

Doug Dean

Lee Ann Teri Linda Kipp

Authors' note: Original observation notes were hand written.

3:05 Teacher (T) talks to Leslie about a printout.

T's reading something in the textbook.

T says: "...tres mal. Je suis tres fatigue."

Lee Ann and Linda talk about some test.

Mike asks about the workbook.

Mike, Linda, and Lee Ann joke about something.

T sits back slouched in chair.

T starts class. Says he's going to do an auction today.

David leads in a drill in French. Marsha and John say nothing.

T goes on to hundreds, thousands, millions--9,999,999.

T takes them through them step by step.

I will give xtra credit on tape for 6 digit #s.

3:10 On to auction.

T reads directions from textbook. Students are supposed to yell out #s for # practice. Ss smile.

Dave and Linda get right into it.

Marsha jokes with T, wins book.

Next prize: "A" in French class. Teri, others bid. Teri wins. T says: "T'a deja une "A" pour la classe."

3:15 Next prize: OSU/Michigan tickets.

Larry starts with $1. Students getting a little more receptive.

David-$2 million. Others bid. David wins.

Next prize: MTL hockey player's autograph-big Noble at 2:00 class. Ss give a dirty laugh. Many students don't participate at all (Jessica, Cindy, Tracy, Mike, Linda, Lee Ann, Tom, John.

T goes into monologue (in French).

I focus on Marsha. Smiles and laughs a little.

Price is Right-bid on trip to Hawaii.

T has them write down bid and then say it.

Ss look @ #s in their book to make sure they're saying it right.

T calls on people. Marsha thums thru book for pronunciation.

Kristen jokes w/ T about price of trip.

3:2[illegible] Kristen jokes w/ T in English quite a bit.

T writes down prices of each part of trip on board.

Teri won trip-$5400 bid on $8000 trip.

Ss and T joke about really getting prices.

3:25 Another # exercise.

T thinks of # & has Ss guess it.

Teri, Ben, Larry participate.

T gives higher/lower in French but also uses hand signals.

Ss get into this exercise, if they don't say anything at least they look as if they're concentrating.

David and Linda play around knocking elbows.

3:30 Book exercise-"Going on a trip."

Class responses-go thru list of questions. Eg. "Avez-vous apporte votre dictionnaire?" Ss: Oui, j'ai....

Opposite- Ss ask T individually. (Ss can read question out of book.)

T jokes when he gets to Linda.

Ex. continues. T asks in an accusing tone in French

about Ss bringing French tapes on trip.

Doug stumbles @ his answer. T asks class to help him out, then asks Doug another question.

T asks Ss if they're bringing shirts, clothes' jeans, their dog, etc.

3:35 Ss laughs @ clothes.

New activity: T goes thru possessive pronouns. Linda looks at p. 62 in book. T says it's on test. Ss groan.

T: "Should be able to complain in French." Kristen, Tom, Leslie, Mike start complaining in French. T feeds them words they don't know. Linda does one, then Leslie, then Mike. Mike complains (laughs) in French that Fr. class is very difficult. Linda jokes Hu dept is a big joke.

3:40 T has Ss get into groups of 4 and directs who is in what group. T gives groups 10 minutes to generate as many complaints in French as they can. Can use any resource they want.

T: "...mixture of exp. & inexp. in each group." Complaints will be the extra credit on test.

Cindy, Jean, Doug, & Teri in front of me. Everyone speaks in English.

T: "Vocabulary has to be from Ch.1,2,& 3."

T goes around room & comments on complaints, snickers & most of them.

Ss use books-much page flopping. must be grammatically correct for xtra credit.

3:45 Teri does most writing but Doug helps out w/ looking for words. Cindy adds a complaint. Jean is quiet-kind a looking on in silence.

T silently paces & drinks pop.

3:47 T tells them 2 mins. to go. Asks groups to have their best grammar person check them over, then pauses and says "best grammar persons."

Middle group- L,I,K,D,M getting really into it.

I don't think Jean has contributed anything.

Leslie laughs boisterously.

Kristen & Tom doing most work in their group- Marsha just sits there.

1 min. to go- Ss really getting into it. Done w/ ex.-

Teri as ks Cindy what her name is.

T picks up papers.

Ss talking among themselves.

Lee Ann asks Teri how they did.

T will give back papers on Fri.

3:54 T goes over culture point on French homes in the book.
Marsha is packed up. Teri too. Lee Ann's book bag is on her lap. Cindy packs up.
Ss don't look like they care.

3:55 T: "Good job today."